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INK OCHi

FIRST OF ITS KIND FROM KERALA

56

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DJAKOU KASSI NATHALIE

"—beyond mugs and pots"

CULTURAL eMAGAZINE
INKOCHi
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Editor's Note

WOMEN DOMINATE AFRICAN CLAY ART

Women dominate the production of pottery in Africa, yet few scholars have considered women the likely creators of the figurative sculpture recovered archaeologically across Africa. Indeed, the question of who made these highly celebrated potteries is rarely raised. A close look at the art historical and archaeological literature exposes the gender biases that privilege men's 'high' art over women's 'low' craft, making men the presumed creators of these works. Examples of women's predominance in the production of ritually-destined figurative pottery alone counters such unsubstantiated assumptions. Through such production women play important roles in the construction of social and cultural meanings.

African art describes the modern and historical paintings, sculptures, installations, and other visual culture from native or indigenous Africans and the African continent.

Countering the assumption that African arts and societies are largely unchanging and bound to traditions and customs, the remarkable diversity of objects and styles on display in this issue of INKochi tells a different story.

Happy Reading...!!
Varghese T. Thomas

DJAKOU KASSI NATHALIE

"—beyond mugs and pots"

Text by: Djakou Kassi Nathalie / Tillism

"**Clay pottery is not just utilitarian**," says Djakou Kassi Nathalie. "In my environment, it'll take time for it to be considered more than a craft. I'm trying my best to infuse content into pottery and show that it is art. I want people to see beyond mugs and pots. I hope the ideas I put forward touch people." >>

“—beyond mugs and pots”

They do. A raised fist made of rusty-red laterite clay, “Speak Out” is Djakou Kassi’s latest artwork currently on display in Los Angeles, in Signature African Art gallery. It is a symbol of power and support for marginalized communities. African masks cover the larger-than-life clenched fist and the messages carved into the clay cry out against racism and discrimination. >>

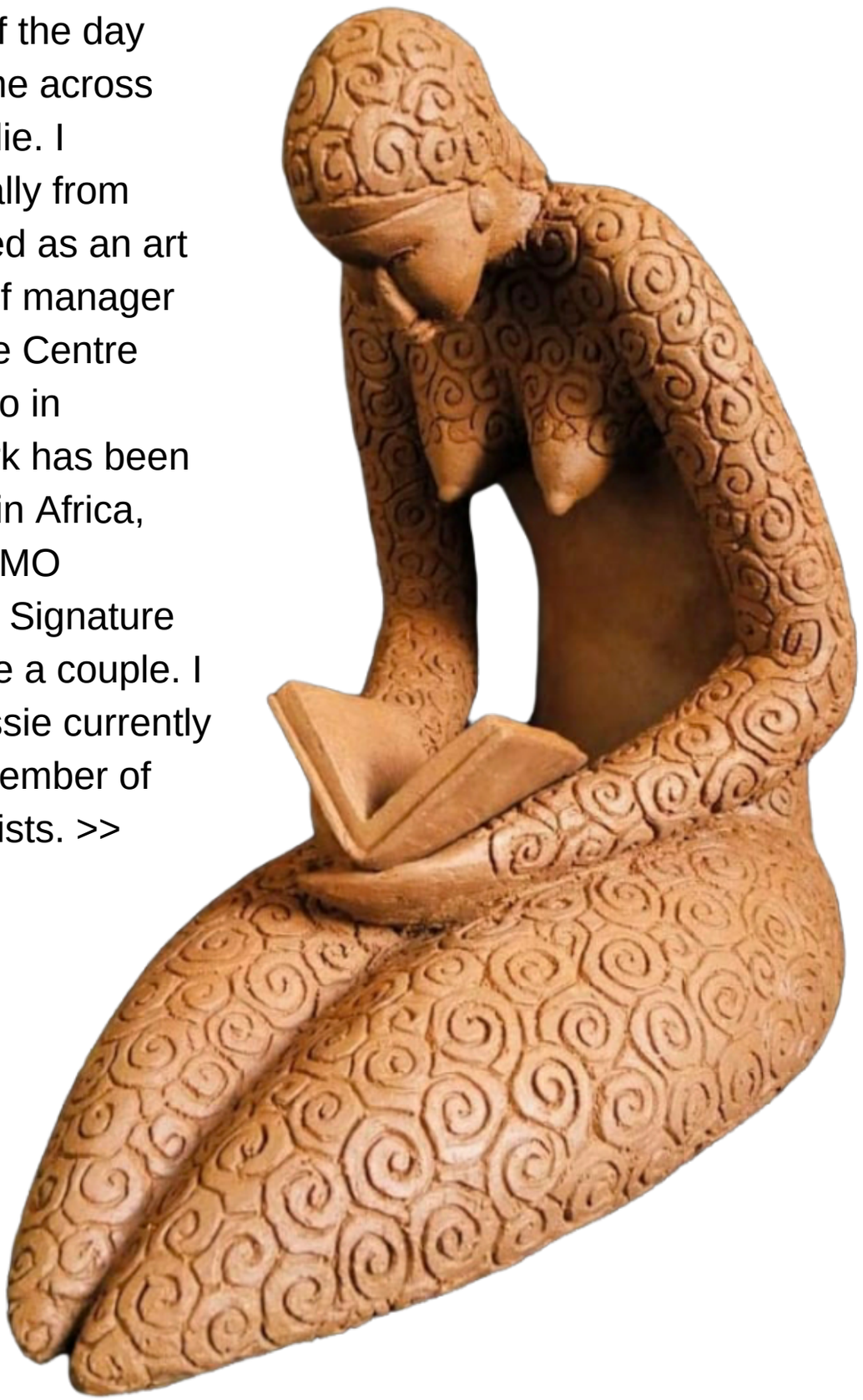
“—beyond mugs and pots”

“Love”, “No to Hate”, “We are all Human”, and “I can’t Breath” is a direct reference to the struggle faced by people of color everywhere especially African Americans in the United States and the Black Lives Matter movement. The details of masks proudly portray African tradition juxtaposed with the response to the rise of fascist right wing extremism. It is a remarkable piece of art. >>

“—beyond mugs and pots”

Tentatively stepping out of my comfort zone

I’ve spent the better part of the day clicking on every link I come across about Djakou Kassi Nathalie. I discover that she is originally from Cameroon. She first worked as an art instructor, then as the chief manager of the ceramic studio at the Centre d’Art Appliqué of Mbalmayo in Cameroon. I know her work has been exhibited in many venues in Africa, Europe, and the USA — SMO Contemporary Art (SMO) , Signature African Art gallery, to name a couple. I also know that Djakou Kassie currently lives in Nigeria, and is a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists. >>



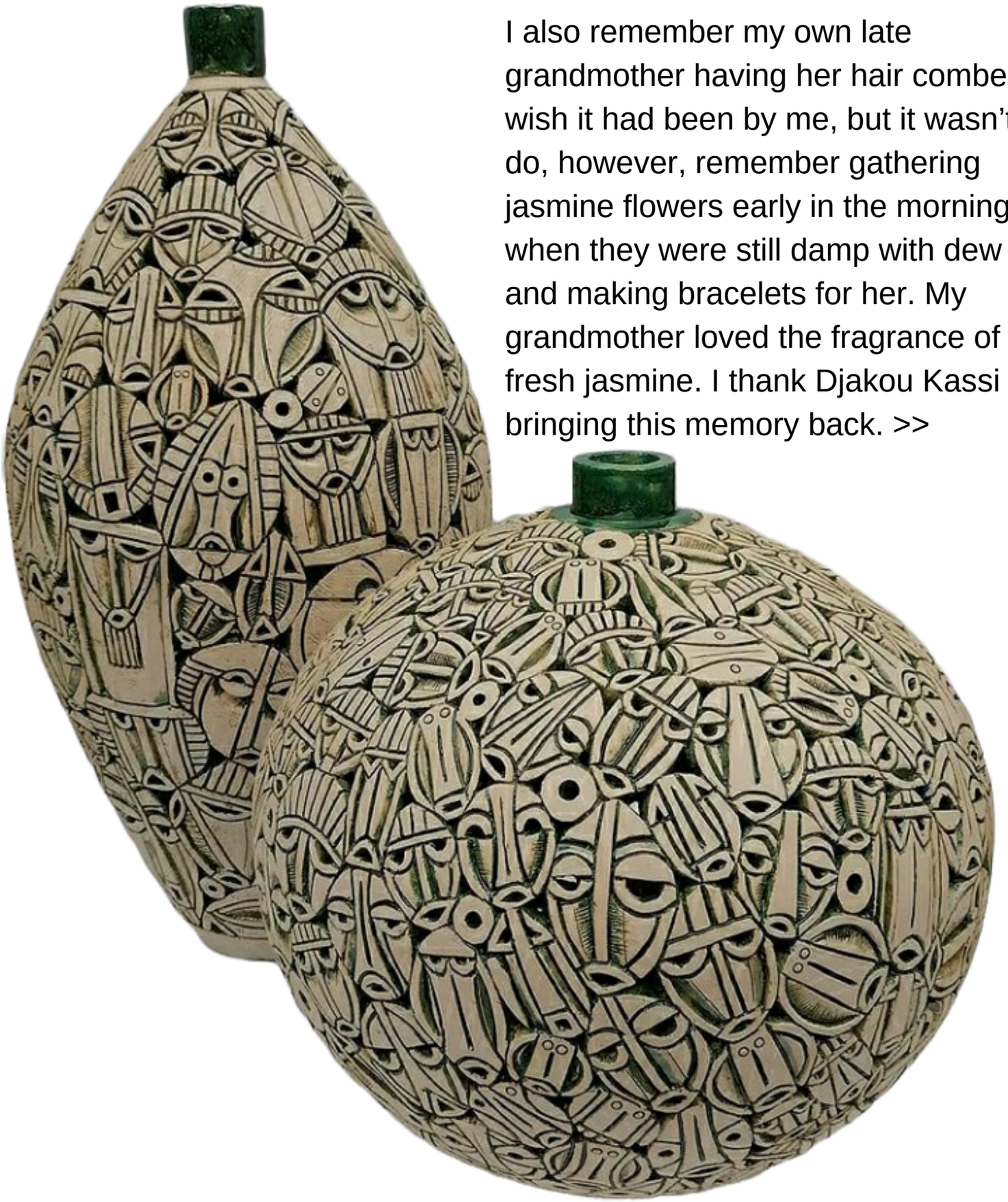
“—beyond mugs and pots”

But, I want to know more than what I could find on a CV or a LinkedIn account. I want to know what motivates Djakou Kassi as an artist. I want to have a glimpse of the person who creates these detailed ceramic pieces. Desire has a way of pushing timidity aside, so I send her a message on Instagram asking her to share a something about herself —and to my great surprise, she responds. >>

“—beyond mugs and pots”

The person within the artist Djakou Kassi Nathalie’s strongest childhood memory is caring for her late grandmother, Djakou Elisabeth. She used to comb her hair, trim her nails, and help her with basic needs. I find myself captivated by this tender scene of a little girl taking care of her elderly grandmother. So, it doesn’t surprise me at all when she adds that her art reflects themes like friendship, humanity, traditions, women, and knowledge. >>

“—beyond mugs and pots”

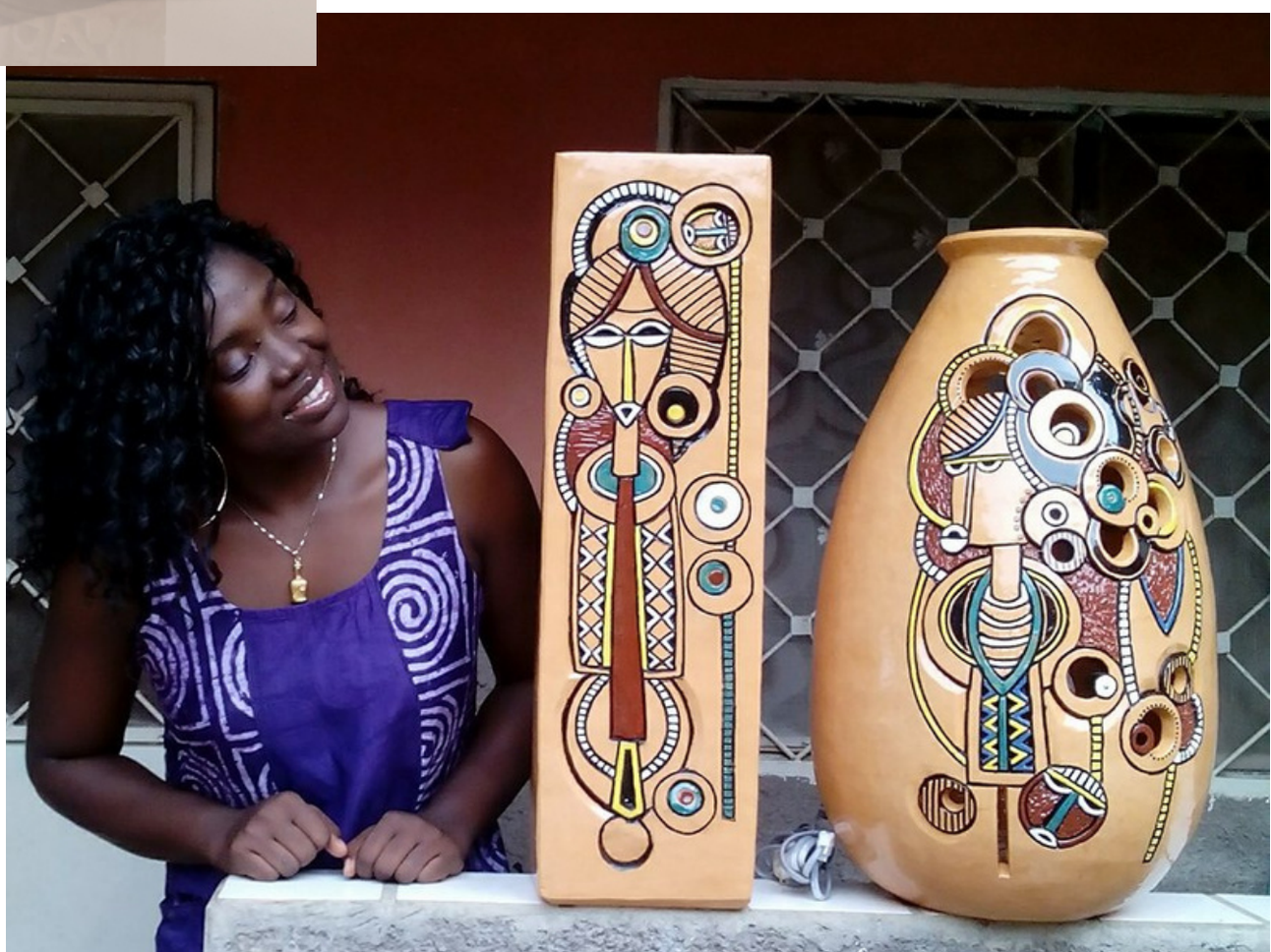


I also remember my own late grandmother having her hair combed. I wish it had been by me, but it wasn’t. I do, however, remember gathering jasmine flowers early in the morning when they were still damp with dew and making bracelets for her. My grandmother loved the fragrance of fresh jasmine. I thank Djakou Kassi for bringing this memory back. >>

“—beyond mugs and pots”

“Clay addict since 1992”

Nature and our capricious relationship with the environment is a recurring theme in Djakou Kassi’s pottery. We, the human race, have arrived so recently on the scene, yet our impact on this planet has been, for the most part, disastrous. Our inability to find moderation is reflected in a Bamileke proverb in French: >>



“Le seul Gros ventre qu’on felicite est celui de LA femme enceinte.”

“The only big belly that is congratulated is that of the pregnant woman.”

Her artistic message in her pottery is a reminder to appreciate the majesty of nature with care. >>

“—beyond mugs and pots”

“—beyond mugs and pots”

Another recurring theme is domestic violence. It is for this reason, Djakou Kassi emphasizes the need for women to be independent, not just financially but in a way that they can act on their own initiative with confidence. She, herself, is an example of this message which she shapes into her art. Her dream is to set up her own fully equipped studio where she can guide ceramic artists of the future. >>

Let's see what the future holds" she concludes with a contemplative smile.

With ceramic artists like Djakou Kassi Nathalie in the world, I have no doubt that the future is bright. <>

"—beyond mugs and pots"

About The BOOK

The Last Queen

Chitra Banerjee

Feeling blessed that this is what reviewers are saying about The Last Queen:

‘Stunning and moving … Chitra Banerjee is writing at the very top of her game.’ William Dalrymple

‘An unforgettable story about the fearless, much-feared queen whom history seems to have forgotten.’ Shabana Azmi

‘Divakaruni and her women characters are … formidable’ The Wire

‘Path-breaking, poignant, exhilarating ... unputdownable’ Business Standard

‘It’s heartening that this woman of substance ... is finally getting her due’ The Tribune, Chandigarh

‘The author’s mastery with words and her gift of weaving in fictional moments while staying true to the original premise ... continues to shine through ... The greatest victory of The Last Queen is perhaps that it leaves the reader eager to know more about the real life of this royal rarely spoken of’ Scroll.in

‘Divakaruni’s magic with words and exceptional storytelling skills shine through her writing.’ Times of India >>

The Last Queen

Chitra Banerjee

‘A literary page-turner, a deeply satisfying historical novel that crackles with the pace and the vivaciousness of top-tier genre fiction ... a protagonist that a millennial/Gen Z readership can get behind’ The Hindu Businessline

‘A relevant read for our times … The Last Queen retrieves Rani Jindan from the forgotten annals of history’ Financial Express

‘The author [has] outdone herself with this magnificently packed offering ... Unputdownable”’ Deccan Herald

‘The riveting tale of an extraordinary woman’ The Indian Express

‘A compelling retelling of the magnificent history of the Sikh empire through the eyes of a fearless woman who influenced much of it.’ The Daily Star

‘The author invokes the feelings and passions, courage and wisdom, mistakes and recklessness of this historical figure.’ Firstpost

‘Divakaruni lives up to her ability to create the inner world of women and their dilemmas… Jindan’s story is something to be told, re-told and read out aloud.’ The Week >>

The Last Queen

Chitra Banerjee

‘The story unfolds confidently in Jindan’s own language…the story of an imperfect Indian woman in complicated times who dared to dream of glory. May this tribe of imperfect women increase.’ Open

‘Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Last Queen paints Jindan as an inspiring figure…The narrative moves from young adult-style steamy romance to hard-edged history pretty swiftly, with Jindan establishing herself as a formidable character the British are increasingly wary of.’ Mint Lounge

‘Divakaruni breathes life into the character of this enigmatic historical figure, making her seem more real and human than any textbook ever has.’ Punch

‘Invokes in you the spirit to fight your circumstances and come out a winner.’ Women’s Web

‘Absolutely laudatory’ Punjab Today <>

Simonetta Gatto
Author

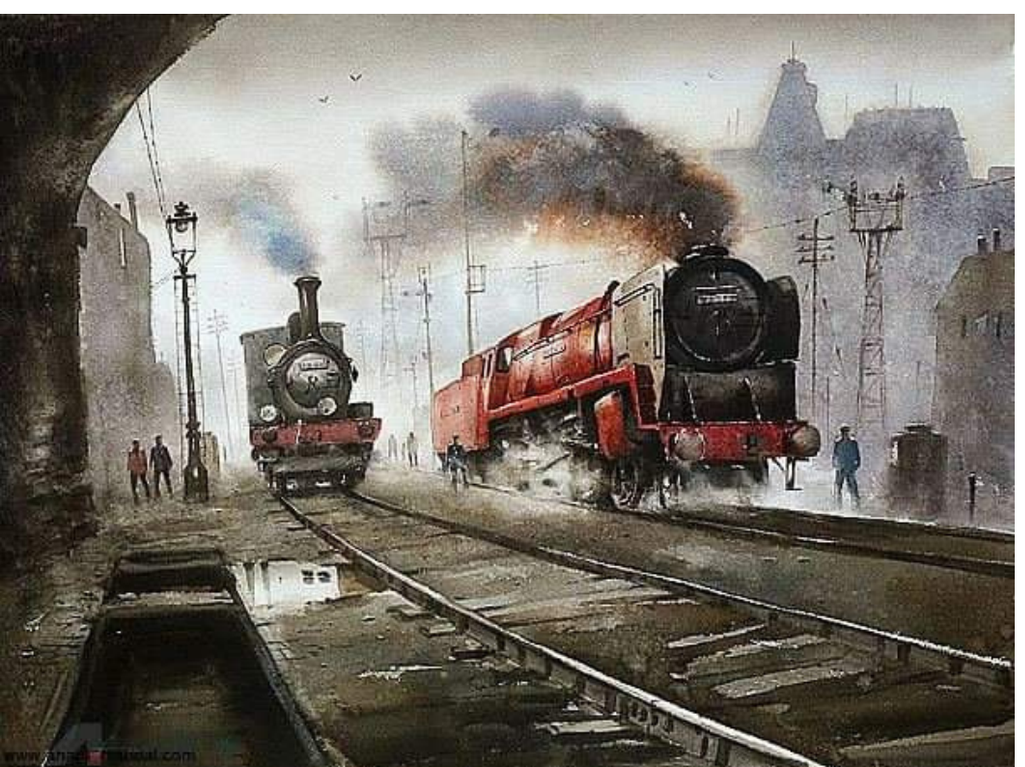
THE MINARET OF JAM, AFGHANISTAN

Built at 1,900 m above sea level and far from any modern town, this minaret rises 65 meters into the air within a rugged and tight valley near the confluence of the Hari and Jam rivers in central Afghanistan. Built in 1194, it is the second tallest minaret in the world after the Qutb Minar in Delhi - which is seven meters taller and was built a mere two years before.

The landscape looks barren, but it was once the thriving summer capital of the semi-nomadic Ghurid dynasty, Firuzkuh, reputedly one of the greatest cities of its age, competing with Herat as a center of art, literature, and theology. It was built using the ruins of Ghazna, 600 Km away, the capital of the Ghaznavid dynasty whom the Ghurids conquered in 1151. The troops killed 60,000 inhabitants, then forced the rest to transport what remained to Firuzkuh, where their blood was combined with mud in order to form additional bricks.

Ananta Mandal

Source: Art Family India



Ananta Mandal was born in 1983. He spent his childhood at Chakdaha, a small town in West Bengal. After pursuing his graduation in Bachelor of Visual Arts in the discipline of Graphic Design and Applied Art with First Class from Govt. College of Art & Craft, Calcutta University, Kolkata in 2007, he moved to Mumbai, India. At present he lives and works here.

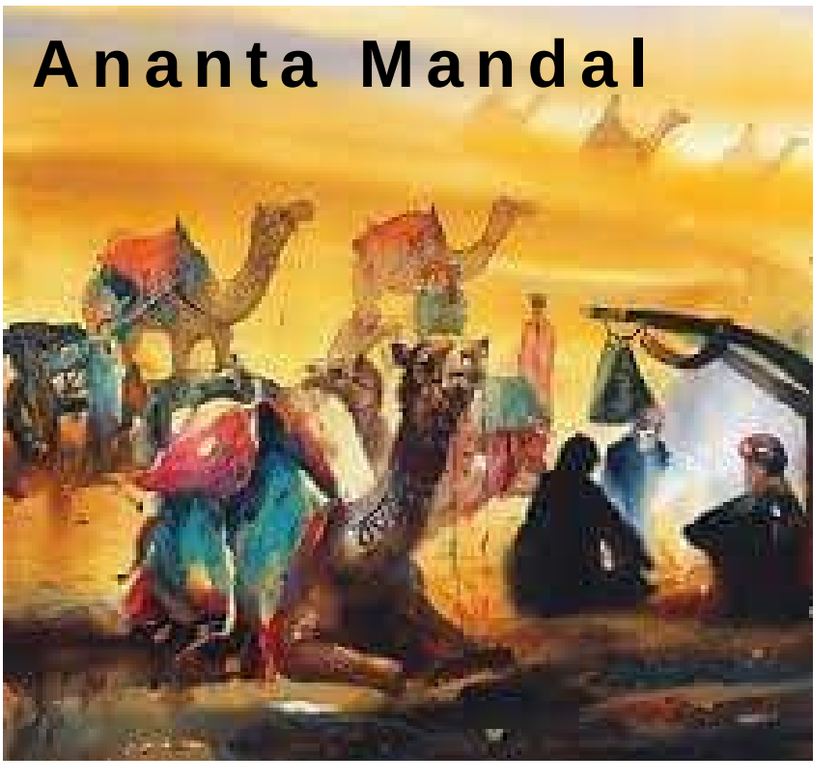
During his early phase the little boy started painting the Indian mythological characters and legend Personalities from photo calendars and various books. Later, in childhood, his artistic sense aroused, when he got introduced to a book series of old masters, named “THE GREAT ARTISTS”. >>

He realized that only with colors and brush, another world can be created. He accepted this as a challenge and from that day onwards the journey began which is still going on. Before college, as a part of the journey, with an inner quest to learn more, he explored Sealdah and Howrah Railway Stations to capture from life, the movement and rhythm of different characters there. He also went to Indian Museum, Archaeological Department to study from antiques.

Ananta Mandal

After schooling, he enrolled himself in the most prestigious institute Govt. College of Art & Craft, in Kolkata. This academic journey gave him a platform to fully indulge himself into his passion of painting. A turning page was written when all his dedication and fervor drove him into relentless effort to nothing but only become an artist. >>

Ananta Mandal

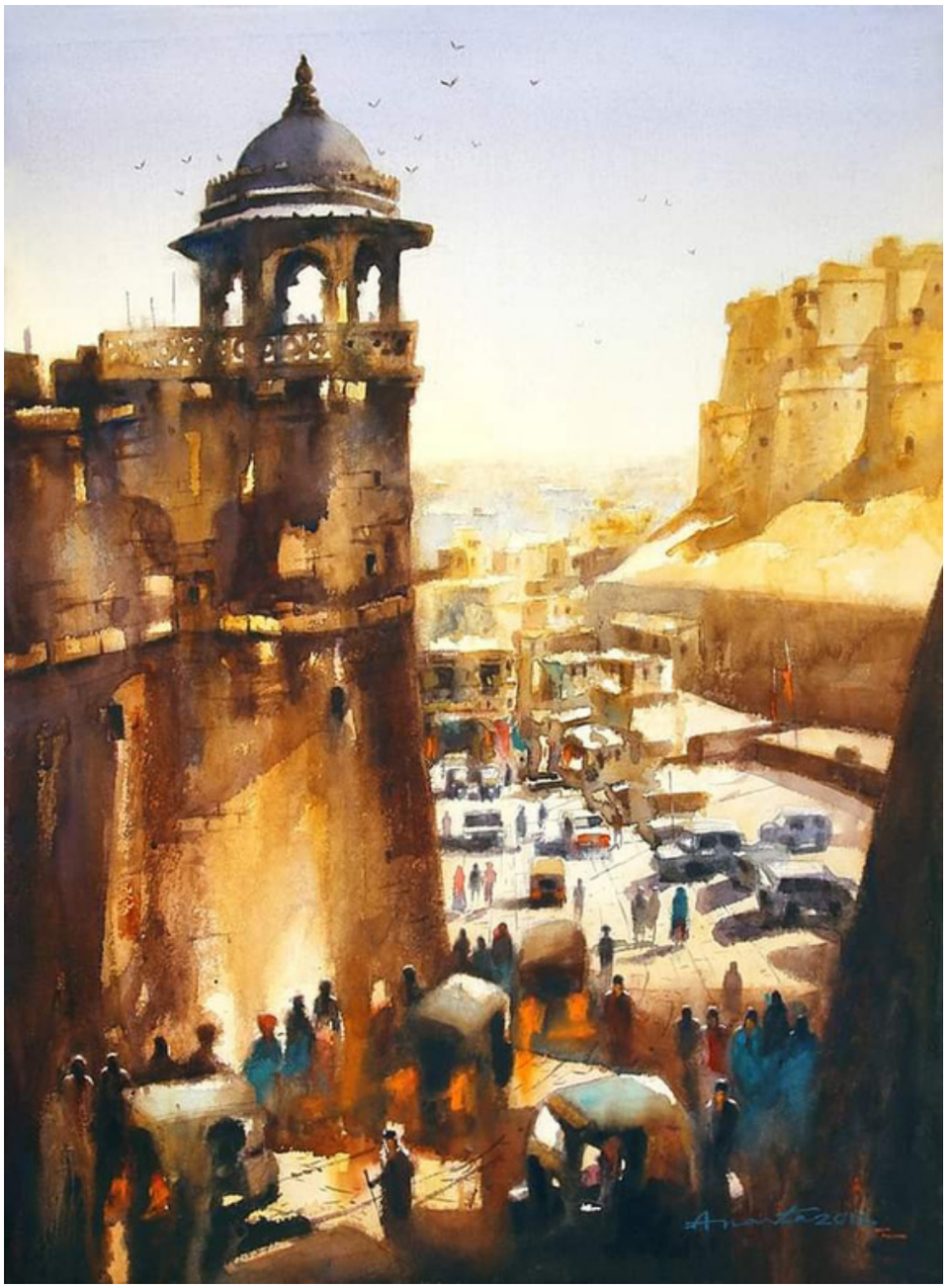


Ananta has held regular one man shows of his work since his college time. His first solo exhibition was held in Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, in the year 2004.

His painting career augmented as he shifted to Mumbai in 2008. Gradually his creations spreaded with numerous invited group shows as well as by solo exhibitions in various galleries and organizations. At the same time he was invited to exhibit and demonstrate in different parts of India and abroad.

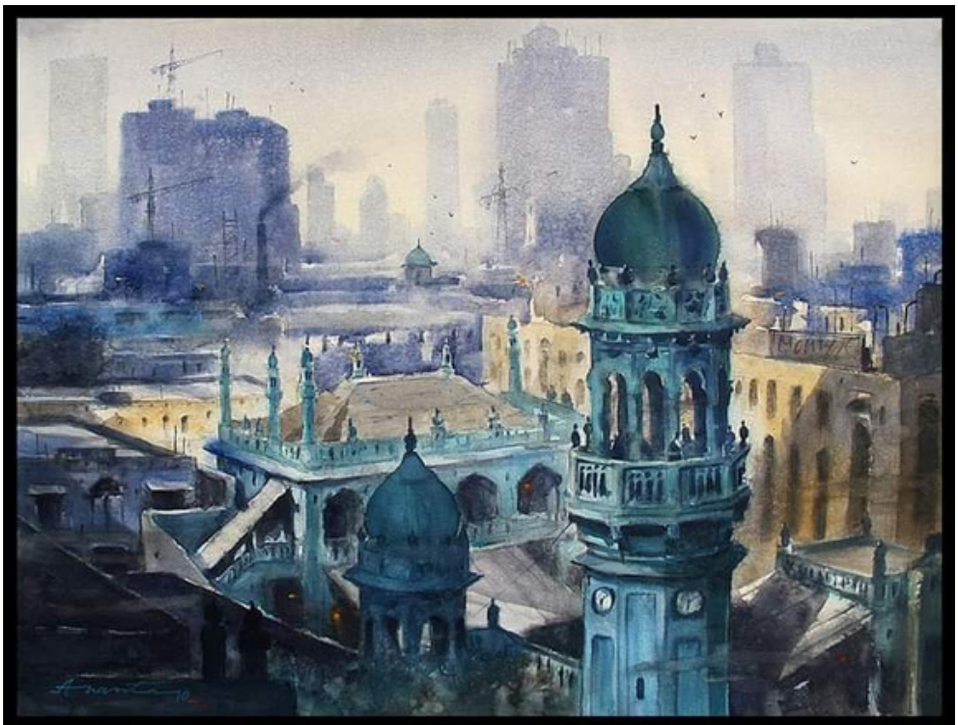
During his college days, Ananta bagged many national and international awards. From participating in the most prestigious Harmony Art show, Mumbai in 2008, his excellent achievements include the First Place Award from 36th International Exhibition at the Watercolor Art Society-Houston, U.S.A. in 2013, >>

Ananta Mandal



Award for Best Landscape in Watercolor from The Bombay Art Society, Mumbai, in both 2006 and 2011, and many more to mention. In 2016, Ananta was invited by the Indian branch of Faber Castell to test their new watercolors. His painting is featured in the front cover of their new set of watercolors.

He is known as an expressive and imaginative painter. Mostly his paintings are created in impressionist manner and surrealist way in various mediums like watercolor, oil and acrylic. Ananta has evolved a highly individual style, deeply contemporary in its sensibilities. His paintings are best known for realistic urban landscapes. >>



His brush stroke speaks of many things: the hustle and bustle of modern city life, figurative movements, festive seasons, seascapes and lakes, the time endured old railway steam engine, tropical desert, and the many moods of nature; where fluid moments are brilliantly captured by the artist. He has also gained recognition for his surrealistic paintings. His youthful exuberance and his wide-eyed optimism reflect in the paintings. He has a fine sense of composition with an eye for subtle details and a tactile sense of monsoon atmospherics. Ananta has shown with considerable skill, how in the presence of rain, human activities are endowed with a special beauty. His water colors are bright and sensuous but their atmosphere evokes a strange mysteriousness. >>

Ananta Mandal

His sketchy use of acrylic and oil, lends his figure vitality and fluidity of motion with surface wrinkles; his color and tonal compositions set up a dynamic encounter in a neutral space fraught with ambiguity. Impression with different textures, adds to the meaning and depth of an artwork; contrast of transparent areas, set against thick, solid paint with varying intensity of strokes, gives surface, a palpable quality.

Mandal has continuously supported being part of fund raising charity art shows in numerous NGO and charitable trust in Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Dubai, London etc. These organizations are committed to raising fund to fight against cancer, women education, child rights and special needs and many others social norms. His notable contributions include auction and many other prestigious charitable art show like participating in the fund raising art exhibition for the Nargis Dutt Memorial Charitable Trust by Priya Dutt, NGO CRY, Indian Cancer Society, Cancer Patients Aid Association, SNF Development Center. Mandal's artworks are also given to many art auctions to help raise money for social cause. >>

Ananta Mandal

Ananta is a member of numerous art organizations, including Member of The Pennsylvania Watercolor Society 2012-13, San Diego Watercolor Society, U.S.A. - 2008-09, Philadelphia Water Color Society, U.S.A. - 2008-09. Life Member of the Bombay Art Society, the Art Society of India, Mumbai.

Besides involving himself in Workshops, he also keeps himself busy in making experimental films based on paintings, Video Installations. Among his various passions, Photography also has a place.

His works can be viewed in numerous public and private collections worldwide.
The artist who has always been miles away from limelight is a special feast to the eyes of art lovers. <>

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Artist Thankaraj Kozhummal

One Week One Shot

By:
Sanjay Sen

Brahminy Kite with fish
With Nikon D500, Nikkor 200-500 mm
Odisha.

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